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## II. *GRADUATE WORK IN ECONOMICS*

### GRADUATE WORK IN PREPARATION FOR TEACHING

Perhaps it has been forgotten that the organization of a real department of graduate instruction as a part of university work in America is less than fifty years old. The evolution of such work has been from college foundations toward a larger and wider development of instruction of a graduate character. The original purpose of such courses was to fit the candidates for degrees for teaching positions. This purpose, however, is no longer the controlling one in graduate schools, for new demands are being made upon them for experts in technological fields and municipal, state, and federal governments. These schools have been non-professional, emphasizing culture and learning as their great objects. Adherence to this broad purpose has clouded the vision of the men who guided them when they were interpreted in terms of community life. Men have not been prepared to do distinctive things.

Too often the teaching has emphasized "my" theory and "my" development of a specific line of work, not so much for the purpose of instructing the student as for the purpose of developing a book to be presented to the public later on. In the graduate departments emphasis has been placed upon the Doctor's dissertation, perhaps too much so, in that the holding to specific lines of work tends to narrow scholarly interests and limit the sources of knowledge to which the candidate for the degree looks for his preparation. It certainly tends to circumscribe his range of vision and has a tendency to develop a pedantic point of view. In holding this view I do not wish to be considered as opposed to good thesis work. In fact, I think the graduate student should be tested out in research methods more than he generally is when limited to his thesis as the means of showing his ability to get facts and co-ordinate them.

The purpose of graduate work stated broadly is to "emphasize discerning judgment and develop critical estimation of the essential significance of facts and principles." The colleges and universities look to the graduate schools for the men to fill teaching positions. This really is the largest demand made upon such schools and it is surprising that two things in particular should be taken for granted. One of these is that anybody can teach, and the other, that economics is such a narrow subject that a man who has had courses in the department of economics ought to be able to cover any point in the field. The viewpoint of economics has been and still is social. But each day sees a larger and larger body of students calling for training in business. Now the viewpoint of business is not in the ordinary sense social, it is distinctly acquisitive with profits spelled in large letters. This call for help must be met, and in order to meet it the graduate schools must do one of two things: either let go, or take hold. If they propose to let go, then the college of commerce succeeds them, with a distinct loss of the graduate viewpoint. If the graduate schools propose to take hold, then there must be a distinctive recognition of this need and an intelligent attempt made to meet it. At present business procedure is not a science; even the facts are not at hand. But this makes the problem just that much more a work of graduate character.

Returning now to the theme: The weakness of the present product as it relates to the preparation of teachers can be stated in this way: first, the overemphasis on specific lines of work and an insufficient grounding in the theory of the subject; secondly, lack of knowledge regarding the elementary principles of teaching and the organization of material for purposes of teaching; thirdly, the lack of knowledge of educational principles and the adherence to principles of instruction that have been repudiated by modern psychology; fourthly, the lack of understanding of the purpose and organization of colleges and universities, and finally, a failure to make a community and business association that relates the individual and his subject to the life of the community. Put in the form of a problem, it would appear that the obstacles in the way of the development of better preparation of candidates for

degrees in graduate schools for teaching positions are these: first, a lack of wide knowledge of their subject-matter; secondly, failure to apprehend clearly methods of presentation; thirdly, the absence of an understanding of educational relationships; fourthly, a small valuation of community life and community connections as a part of training.

In regard to the first point, the graduate student must specialize along some one line over and above the elementary courses that are ordinarily offered in the field of economics. The breadth of interests that now exists in the case of economics makes it necessary for every graduate student who wishes to be a master of some specific line to specialize in particular fields. Yet this specialization can be carried too far for general teaching purposes, if it is done at the expense of broad understanding. Consequently the teacher should have a broad and liberal background of culture, and particularly a wide knowledge of both political and industrial history. In other words, his specialization ought to follow upon the development of a considerable body of knowledge rather than precede it, and yet there seems to be a tendency for the candidate for a Doctor's degree to plunge into special lines of work before he has secured the larger vision and larger background for his specialization. If I might put it more specifically the man who is a candidate for a teaching position in the field of economics ought to have the undergraduate courses in sociology relating to the ethnological development of people and the general principles of social organization. In addition to these he should know the political and industrial history relating not only to his own country, but to England and Europe as well. After he has obtained these (and I am taking it for granted that the language requirements have already been met), he may go on into larger specialization of his own subject. Certainly out of his elementary economics should follow a course in money and banking, financial history, and economic history, and then upon these should be developed a very extended and thoroughly organized course in the advanced theory of economics. The tendency of modern instruction seems to be to pursue the false gods of descriptive material and thus lose sight of the essential groundwork of theory. I do not know that it is

necessary for me to enlarge upon this point, since there is to be a considerable discussion of the place of economic theory in graduate work following my paper.

The second difficulty I have referred to as lack of knowledge regarding the principles of teaching. That this statement is clearly true of practically all the younger men who enter the field of teaching can be readily confirmed by reverting to our own experiences. Most of us had to find our way gropingly and sometimes after bitter experiences when it came to the elementary phases of instruction. The visiting of college classes has emphasized the deplorable lack of organization in recitations and lecture material, especially as they are presented by the younger men. Sometimes such failure takes the line of wrong emphasis upon subject-matter, and sometimes there is a great deficiency in the science of questioning. I have come to the conclusion that these difficulties are due not so much to a lack of knowledge of the subject-matter as to a lack of understanding of educational principles.

Most of those present today were brought up under the doctrine of formal discipline, and we were told that it was not so much the content of a course as it was the manner in which it was presented. Consequently courses of study that had memory tests and required a good deal of drudgery to do the necessary work were looked upon as disciplinary in character and good for the soul of the student who undertook them. The psychologists of the present day have told us that the content of a course has more to do with the effect and influence it has upon the student than the general character of the subject and the method of presentation. We have also learned that the development of a specific quality through the mastery of one field, such as languages, does not carry over into the field of a subject like economics, and that a man might very well be a high-grade student in French and German without reaching any particular distinction in the field of economics. This means, then, that adherence to the idea of formal discipline, the making of a subject hard and difficult, does not necessarily result in successful teaching. Now a young man entering a college department for the first time, with little or no experience as a teacher, must find his way through various experiments into successful

teaching. He consequently uses his classes as clinics and as material upon which to experiment. In the course of two or three years he may come forth pretty well purged of his earlier notions, and may through his experiences develop into a teacher of considerable ability.

I have referred also to the relationship of the instructor to the college or university. Our universities are in a transitional stage without any question, and they have been hampered again and again by the failure of the teaching staff to understand clearly the movement of modern education. Every faculty meeting is witness to the truth of this statement. In them struggles are constantly arising between the modern viewpoint of education and the older methods, and the young man who enters an institution of learning without some idea of the history of education is handicapped for the best work he can do there. It has been my experience that it takes in the smaller institutions not less than two years for the newcomer to obtain what might be called a knowledge of the methods of procedure existing there, and in the larger institutions three years would probably be nearer the measure of time. It certainly would seem desirable then that candidates for positions as teachers in institutions should have some knowledge of the background of the profession to which they belong, and yet the graduate schools have practically omitted any requirement of this kind for the candidates whom they are recommending for college positions.

If I may go on still farther, I might say that in the smaller communities where many of the colleges and universities are located there is a constant demand upon the men in the social and economic departments to deal with community problems. These problems vary all the way from matters that are of local concern to those that are state-wide in character. And more than that, the presence of various types of opinion in such a community means discussion, and wide guidance of it is always desirable. The young man who enters such a community is called upon at once to take part in such discussion, and too often he is very poorly prepared for any such relationship. In the first place, he has no knowledge of the meaning of community organization and has little

understanding of the part which it plays in the whole scheme of society. The result is that his work as an economist is militated against by reason of his failure clearly to understand community action, and further, his opportunities for service are hampered because of the lack of such understanding. His attempts to guide business men along practical lines too often come to nothing on account of the teacher's failure to understand that economics emphasizes the social organization and does not in its broader aspect deal with the detailed principles of business. This phase of the problem has already been referred to at the opening of the paper and again calls attention to the need of instruction in the principles of business organization.

In stating this point I come to the last part of my discussion, and Yankee-fashion I may begin it by asking the question, What can be done in view of these difficulties?

I should say that there ought to be a sharper distinction between the various groups of persons who expect to enter the different fields of labor in the economic vineyard. We might classify these as: first, the teaching field; second, the field of the expert, and third, the field of the publicist. The distinction which I make between the last two is that the expert is associated with the work of some commission, like the Tax Commission, or some business enterprise, while the publicist enters journalism, the lecture field, or the field of literature. If this distinction were made, it would be possible to ask the candidates for teaching positions to come to their graduate work with some preparation in the field of education. For instance, I see no reason why the graduate school should not ask those who propose to teach to take at least two or three courses in the field of education prior to their entrance upon graduate work. These courses in education ought to be educational psychology, the history of education, and the development of college and university education as shown particularly in this and other nations. It would be desirable further that he should be required to take a seminar course in the methods of the recitation, so that when he goes out from the university he will not be compelled to use a great deal of his time and strength in adapting himself to the mere machinery of his problem, but may actually have some

knowledge relative to methods of presentation that will be of value to the institution to which he goes.

Again, the matter of community connections, to which reference has been made, could be secured through the utilization of opportunities for actual contact with some practical problem. I see no reason why the student who is spending three years in a graduate school should not spend a part of the time in some state department or some division of municipal government or in some industrial enterprise. It is true that he might not get from these different phases of outside activity all that he would hope for, but as the relationship between the graduate school and these different organizations was developed and a clearer understanding of the purpose came to both sides, there would be a valuable influence brought to bear upon the graduate student in the dealing with the actual problems. One of the difficulties with the present system of theses is the danger of emphasizing mere mechanical methods of investigation. The collecting of a bibliography and the gathering of a certain number of notes and putting these down in a given form, all mean a monument to industry, but not necessarily to knowledge.

Hence it is possible, in my opinion, to work out a plan of this kind that should be of more value to the development of a well-rounded, thoroughgoing graduate student who is preparing for teaching, and if these things I have referred to can be done, there ought to come out of these schools, not a man with a Doctor's degree who has only a narrow knowledge of his subject, but a man who has a clear knowledge of his subject, with a very considerable background of social, political, and economic history, with some knowledge of educational processes, and with some appreciation of the problems of college and university administration, together with some actual practical experience in dealing with affairs. This is not a difficult program, and I see no reason why it could not be carried out. Certainly the criticisms that are now being made of graduate students, particularly in the direction of confounding graduate with undergraduate work, the mixing of mature and immature men, and of research with lecture courses, with additional assignments as a means of increasing work, are



distinctly detrimental from the point of view of the value of graduate work as a preparation for the work of teaching.

The time has come for a better organization of graduate schools and the placing of them on a more professional basis than exists at the present time. To this there will be made the objection that the graduate school is not a professional school and ought not to be on a professional basis. I am, however, using the term professional in the sense of developing a graduate school with the intensity of purpose that is seen in the professional schools, and this I believe can be done.

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